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ABSTRACT

This dissertation summary discusses a study to investigate the elementary school teacher role and its concomitant expectations as perceived by principals and teachers. Teachers were surveyed as to how they perceived their own roles and what they thought principals perceived the roles of teachers to be. Principals in those same schools were surveyed to determine their expectations regarding the teachers' roles. The study concentrated on four selected roles of the teacher in low-income schools, including roles toward pupils, colleagues, parents, and the community. Responses to questionnaires were received from 138 of 142 teachers and from all 14 principals surveyed. One conclusion was that role conflict is most likely to occur between white teachers and teachers who are members of a minority group in connection with teacher behavior toward colleagues, parents, and in the community. The paper states that a need exists for improved communications between all groups in a school district about each group's role definitions and expectations. (Author/LD)

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ROLE EXPECTATIONS OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS AS PERCEIVED BY PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS IN LOW-INCOME SCHOOLS

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FOREWORD

This study represents issue number six of Research Reports on Educational Administration for Volume VI, 1975-76. Through the series, the Bureau of Educational Research and Services has brought timely, significant and relevant research to the desks of practicing school administrators in Arizona.

The investigation by Dr. Mack Branham, Jr., was concerned with an examination of the role of the elementary teacher in low-income schools as defined by ESEA Title I. Teachers were surveyed as to how they perceived their own roles and what they thought principals perceived the roles of teachers to be. Principals, in those same schools, were surveyed to determine their expectations regarding the role of the elementary school teacher in low-income schools.

Other dissertations which have been summarized and published in this series are listed on the inside back cover. All dissertations from which the summaries are derived are available on interlibrary loan and may be obtained from any library upon application to the Director of Libraries, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona 85281. All dissertations are also available on microfilm from University Microfilm, Inc., 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106.

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ROLE EXPECTATIONS OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS AS PERCEIVED BY PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS IN LOW-INCOME SCHOOLS

INTRODUCTION

Teachers in their professional role are expected to be able to do many things. They are expected to: (1) be the possessor of knowledge which can be successfully imparted to children; (2) have some knowledge of child psychology; (3) perform as a disciplinarian; (4) serve as an evaluator and counselor of the activities of children; (5) assist in curriculum development; (6) be effective in dealing with parents; and (7) continually be in quest of new knowledge and new ideas in their profession.

Also, teachers must know the major goals of education in the cultures to which they belong and do their part in helping to accomplish those goals. Their demonstrated competence in performing all of these duties is the criterion by which they are judged by their superiors, the public and their professional colleagues.

Studies have shown that the interrelationship between the teacher and principal has much influence upon school activities. The principal's expectations of the role of the teachers will determine, to a large extent, the degree of freedom which the teachers have to develop in that role.

To function effectively in their role, teachers should know the philosophy of the school within which they work and the limits of behavior which will be "tolerated" by the principal. Teachers must also know their own abilities to tolerate differences with their own value system and the kind of behavior they exhibit as contrasted with what they would like to be doing.

The ways of acting or norms that teachers accept for themselves are in part a result of the internalization of what they think others expect of them. Also, the way teachers view their positions involves an awareness of differences between self-expectations and the expectations of others. A teacher's self-image will vary according to whether he/she perceives these relevant populations as having essentially the same normative views about his/her position or whether he/she perceives marked differences and even conflicts in the views of one population as compared to another.

Scientific emperical investigation of the teachers' role and its concomitant expectations as perceived by principals and teachers would contribute to the effective operation of the school.

THE PROBLEM

The problem of this study was to examine how elementary teachers in low-income schools perceived their roles, how those same teachers perceived what principals held teachers' roles to be and to examine the expectations held by principals for elementary school teachers.

The study concentrated on four selected roles of the elementary school teacher in the low-income school. These roles were: (1) acting toward pupils; (2) acting toward colleagues; (3) acting toward parents; and (4) acting toward community.

PROCEDURE

The descriptive survey research design was employed in this study. During the 1973-1974 school year, 142 elementary school teachers and 14 principals in 14 selected low-income schools, as defined by ESEA Title I, participated in the study.

The instrument used was a questionnaire developed by Dr. John M. Foskett of the University of Oregon. The instrument dealt with the role of the elementary teacher. Five response categories were provided for each norm statement of the instrument. These categories were "definitely should," "preferably should," "may or may not," "preferably should not," and "definitely should not." Both the teacher's questionnaire and the principal's questionnaire contained a section for specific demographic data.

The following statistical tests were used in this study: Mean Response Score, Mann-Whitney U Test, t Test and the analysis of Variance F Test.

FINDINGS

1. The questionnaire was sent to 142 teachers and 14 principals in low-income elementary schools. Responses were received from 138 or 97.2 percent of the teachers and 14 or 100 percent of the administrators.

2. The 45 role norms of the instrument were analyzed by three levels: (1) approval (Mean Response Score between 1.00 and 2.49),

(2) permissive (Mean Response Score between 2.50 and 3.50), and (3) disapproval (Mean Response Score between 3.51 and 5.00). It was found that teachers in their expectations indicated "approval" of the behavior described by the role norm over 35 percent of the time, "permissiveness" over 51 percent of the time and "disapproval" 13 percent of the time. Principals in their expectations indicated "approval" over 42 percent of the time, "permissiveness" 40 percent of the time and "disapproval" nearly 18 percent of the time.

3. There were no statistically significant differences between teachers' expectations and principals' expectations for the four roles of the elementary teacher in low-income schools. This was also true between teachers' expectations of themselves and principals' expectations in regards to Role 1 (acting toward pupils), Role 2 (acting toward colleagues) and Role 3 (acting toward parents).

4. There was a statistically significant difference between teachers' expectations and teachers' perceptions of principals' expectations for Role 4 (acting toward community) of the elementary teacher in low-income schools.

5. There was a significant difference between male and female teachers' expectations on Role 2 (acting toward colleagues).

6. There were statistically significant differences between white (Caucasian) teachers and teachers who were members of minority groups (Black, Mexican-American, Mongolians) on Roles 2, 3 and 4. There were no significant differences between Black teachers and Mexican-American teachers on the four roles of the elementary teacher in low-income schools.

7. There was a significant difference on Role 1 (acting toward pupils) between teachers with 5-10 years teaching experience and those teachers with over 16 years experience in the teaching profession.

8. There was a significant difference between primary and intermediate elementary teachers on Role 3 (acting toward parents) in low-income schools.

9. There were no significant differences according to experience in present position, age, marital status or academic degree level, on any of the four roles of the elementary teacher in low-income schools.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions were drawn from the findings:

1. Rather than being characterized by consensus, the normative structure, as it pertains to the positions of elementary teacher in

low-income schools, is characterized by behavioral norms concerning which there are different levels of agreement among teachers and between teachers and principals.

2. Teachers perceive the normative structure of their positions as allowing a great deal of permissiveness, especially in their behavior toward colleagues and toward the community.

3. Principals are permissive in their expectations relating to behavioral norms of teachers which refer to the teachers acting toward colleagues and the community. This suggests that teachers may feel free to act as their judgment dictates.

4. The extensive use of the "preferable" and "permissive" response categories by teachers and principals suggests that the role of the elementary teacher in low-income schools has some definition, but teachers are permitted to be flexible in their role behavior.

5. If it occurs at all, role conflict between principals and teachers due to differences in perceived expectations is most likely to occur in connection with teacher behavior toward the community.

6. Differences do not exist among teachers in regard to the areas of age, marital status and academic degree levels.

7. If there is role conflict between male and female teachers due to different expectations, it is likely to occur in connection with behavior toward colleagues.

8. To the extent that role conflict arises out of different expectations, role conflict is most likely to occur between white teachers and teachers who are members of a minority group in connection with teacher behavior toward colleagues, parents and in the community.

9. To the extent that role conflict between primary and intermediate teachers arises out of differing expectations, it is likely to occur in connection with behavior toward parents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations were made for the use of the findings of this study:

1. To avert possible conflict between white and minority group elementary teachers, principals of low-income elementary schools should be made aware that there are possible differences between these two groups in relation to their expectations for Role 2 (acting toward colleagues), Role 3 (acting toward parents) and Role 4 (acting toward community).

2. Principals should make teachers fully aware of their expectations for teachers' behavior in the community in order to reduce misunderstandings that teachers have in their perceptions of the principal's expectations for the role of the teacher in acting toward the community.

3. Principals of low-income elementary schools should be aware that there are possible differences between male and female teachers in their expectations for the elementary teacher in acting toward colleagues. With this awareness, misunderstandings which may lead to role conflict may be avoided.

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations for further study were made:

1. This study should be replicated using elementary school teachers in low-income schools from other sections of the United States in order to compare findings and conclusions.

2. The populations of this study could be extended to examine the perceptions of other populations such as superintendents, school board members, community leaders and parents.

3. This study should be done using another set of role norms to see if essentially the same results would be obtained.

IMPLICATIONS

The evidence in this report supports the following implications for the practicing administrator:

1. There is a great need for improved communication between all groups within a school district about each group's role definitions and expectations. This is needed in order to reduce misunderstanding and possible conflicts. These gorups include staff, students, parents and community organizations.

2. If principals are desirous of teachers assuming a particular posture in the community they should clearly communicate such expectations to the teachers.

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